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Statement submitted by Afectividad y Sexualidad, Asociación Civil, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

Inclusion of aspects of violence prevention in social protection programmes to achieve the 2030 agenda

Afectividad y Sexualidad (Affectivity and Sexuality) is a civil association established on 19 October 2001 by a group of professionals interested in promoting human development through emotional and sexual maturity. Our mission is to offer educational models that promote a culture of respectful treatment by applying psychoemotional skills, with the goal of the emotional and sexual development of our beneficiaries to enable them to have full interpersonal relations and improve their quality of life. Our team, comprised of clinical and educational psychologists, educators and specialists in family sciences, works in conjunction with various actors in the educational and cultural sectors to prevent the mistreatment and sexual abuse of children.

As part of the Sustainable Development Goals, in 2015 world leaders made a commitment to end all forms of violence against children by the year 2030. In July 2016, Mexico was one of the first four countries in the world to join the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children. The commitment requires the collaboration and cooperation of such actors as the different branches and tiers of Government, organized civil society, academia, the private sector, religious associations and the media.

Mexico's plan of action under the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children lays the foundation for intersectoral linkage and collaboration among various social actors, government agencies, civil society organizations, academia and international organizations, and coordination with the different tiers of Government in the application and follow-up of actions that will be taken, also including in the strategy various social protection programmes such as PROSPERA.

Just as a front has been forged with multiple actors to eliminate violence against children, individual efforts must be made under the umbrella of social inclusion programmes that include from the moment of their design mechanisms that help to prevent the different forms of violence against children starting with early childhood.

It has been shown in various studies that investment in early childhood and preventive approaches is more economically viable than addressing numerous social problems (James J. Heckman, 2008). Therefore, it is essential that social inclusion programmes target the first 1,000 days of human life. Many countries already have programmes that operate in this way but many programmes are geared towards meeting the economic needs of families or ensuring access for families to public health services. In the case of children, social protection programmes are aimed at improving nutrition to ensure proper development and improving and maintaining good physical health, leaving to one side the emotional and psychological health that plays a large and indeed essential role in their development.

The emotional health of children must be supported by establishing the conditions in which they can live in a family environment of protection, free from violence, as envisaged in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. To that end, their basic needs must be met and efforts undertaken so that they do not grow up in poverty. However, it is also necessary to contribute directly to the elimination and prevention of violence in all its forms.

of transgenerational and systemic child-rearing methods, violence remains the only alternative to educate children, it being the way in which fathers and caregivers were

educated. At the same time, the population is unaware of the effects of violence on development, such as poor neurological, cognitive, interpersonal, behavioural and socio-emotional development.

Children who experience situations of violence are more likely to engage in violent behaviours towards other children and adults and show less empathy towards others, causing a range of social problems. The effect is greater in populations that face marginalization, inequality and poverty.

Society's perception of violence does not correspond directly to the reality of the problem. According to the 2016 study on the perception of child sex abuse in Mexico, conducted by Afectividad y Sexualidad, A.C.; Lexia Insights & Solutions; and Netquest, 50 per cent of Mexicans believe that the main perpetrators of violence against children are strangers, when in fact in about 80 per cent of cases they are family members or otherwise close to the children. At the same time, the residence seen as a home and as a family today is considered a safe place despite the fact that it is the environment where violence is learned.

According to the 2018 study on children, adolescents and their families, carried out by Afectividad y Sexualidad, A.C.; Lexia Insights & Solutions; and Netquest, within the home, in the family, the mother represents the most important point of reference where trust is concerned; the person with whom there is the most open dialogue, which is mostly associated with the support she provides and is strongly linked to the duration and frequency of time spent together. On the other hand, the father figure is one of the family members with whom children spend the least time; his image is not strongly associated with affection as in the case of the mother and he is the person who is least involved in children's activities.

Social protection programmes are necessary to consolidate the environment in which children and adolescents develop. That environment is the home which, if tarnished by poor access to services, inequalities and poverty, influences the development of children.

Social protection and inclusion programmes must provide mechanisms to enable primary caregivers to spend time with their families and to encourage participation by father figures in child-rearing to foster the creation of better emotional ties and the development of psychoemotional skills, leading to lower rates of violence and social problems.

Social protection systems and policies must be focused on mothers but they should also encourage fathers to participate more directly in the education of their children and ensure that they have the resources and necessary time to share experiences with them.

Child-rearing through positive parenting by getting mothers and fathers involved will lead to fewer social problems in the future. Therefore, investments must be made in nutritional and health programmes that protect children from early childhood but also in ensuring that parents have the necessary resources to guarantee their full development.

In the specific case of sexual violence against children, it has been proven that if it is not dealt with early on it will have repercussions for their lives as adults. As a result, the best alternative is to invest in prevention instead of trying to address and correct social problems.

awareness of the value of positive parenting styles and the development of skills with

children as the centre, guaranteeing their fundamental rights and promoting their well-being.

As is internationally agreed, social protection is key to achieving the 2030 agenda. The eradication of poverty is the determining factor in the Millennium Development Goals and that is especially so in areas related directly to the culture of peace and the development of children. Accordingly, strategies, policies and programmes must be established that can address the system in a holistic manner.